

Secure peace through common development

by Song Jian

The following is the speech at the opening ceremony at the International Symposium on Economic Development of the Regions along the New Euro-Asia Continental Bridge (May 7-9) in Beijing, by Mr. Song Jian, State Councillor of the People's Republic of China, chairman of the State Science and Technology Commission, and chairman of the State Environmental Protection Commission.

Mr. Co-Chairmen, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, I am honored, as the chairman of this symposium, to announce the opening of the International Symposium on Regional Economic Development along the New Eurasian Continental Bridge. I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank Your Excellency Mr. Leon Brittan, Mr. Jing Yongjian, Mr. Ling Syargei, and Mr. James Gustave Speth for your support and co-chairing of this conference. At the same time, I would like to extend my warm welcome and sincere greetings to all participants attending the symposium.

We have a long history of economic and trade cooperation as well as cultural exchanges between Europe and Asia. Dating back to over 2,000 years ago, during the Hanwu Emperor's reign in the Han dynasty, when the only land transportation corridor, namely, the Silk Road, was opened, which connected Europe, Africa, and Asia, groups of commercial "camel forces" crossed mountains and traveled in areas amidst China, Central Asia, West Asia, South Asia, Europe, and North Africa, and spread the seeds of civilization and friendship among the countries along the road. With the revolution of the traditional international transportation pattern, resulting from the rapid development of modern science and technology and international trade, which expedited the express, highly efficient, and reliable multicontinental system of integrated transportation taking shape, and hence, pushed the civilization of mankind into a new stage, the world is becoming small and the distance between east and west is becoming shorter and shorter.

The brand-new era for the people in every country has come, in terms of cultural exchanges, trade, and economic and technical cooperation between one another. On Sept. 12, 1990, the historic connection of the railway between China and the former Soviet Union was accomplished at Alatau Pass, which marked the completion of the new comprehensive transportation line connecting the Pacific and the Atlantic, and crossing Europe and Asia. The construction and opening of the new Eurasian continental bridge will once more

brighten the silk road, which had once made great contributions to the spread of the ancient civilization and traditional friendship, and will offer new opportunities and provide a strong base for the expansion of economic cooperation, trade relations, and technical exchanges among the countries along the bridge.

Today, we gather in Beijing to discuss the regional economic development along the new Eurasian continental bridge, to seek new channels and forms of cooperation on economy, trade, and technology between Europe and Asia, to shoulder the task created by our predecessors, and to make our contribution to the mutual prosperity of Europe and Asia.

Some principles

Now, the regional economic development along the new Eurasian continental bridge is faced with good opportunities. The Euro-Asia summit meeting held this March in Bangkok reflects the common wishes and requirements of Eurasian countries to establish a new type of partnership in facing up to the twenty-first century, as well as to strengthen dialogue, deepen economic relations, and expand cooperation in order to adapt to the historical trend. However, the development along the new Eurasian continental bridge is still at a primary stage, and there are some problems and issues caused by economic and non-economic factors yet to be solved. As mentioned by a Chinese proverb, "Everything is difficult at its beginning," we need cooperation of all countries and regions along the bridge and the international communities to address these issues and to solve these problems. In this respect, we advocate some principles as follows:

- Identify economic development as the first priority and respect national differences. Different countries along the bridge possess different features of geography, cultural tradition, religious belief, and customs, and have different political and economic systems at different levels of development. We advocate sticking to the principles of seeking common ground, while reserving differences and common development as a priority when handling the issues between countries, so that the dynamics and prospective future of the regional economic development along the new Eurasian continental bridge can be secured.

- Adhere to the principle of reciprocal benefit, complementarities, and common development. The countries along the new Eurasian continental bridge have their own advantages with complementary characteristics in the formation and development of the land bridge economy. Europe possesses developed economy, advanced technology, and sufficient capital, while Asia has seen fast and dynamic development of its economy in the recent couple of years, marked with large markets as well as high investment returns. Therefore, it is possible for the countries and regions along the bridge to carry out bilateral or multilateral economic and trade cooperation to achieve mutual benefits.

- Adhere to the development strategy of facing up to the future and development in sequence. The new Eurasian

continental bridge goes across the midwest part of China, Central Asia, and West Asia, and at the current stage it is necessary to strengthen the coordination on the operation and management of the land transportation channel already connected. I hope that the countries along the bridge take a strategic view focusing on the future and take a down-to-earth attitude for partial implementation.

Comprehensive planning

The Chinese government attaches great importance to the good opportunities resulting from the development of the new Eurasian continental bridge, and is willing to expand Eurasian economic cooperation, and secure the peace, stability, and prosperity of Europe-Asia and the world as a whole. The Chinese government has mapped out a series of measures and taken actions to push the development, opening-up, and construction of the China section along the new Eurasian continental bridge in recent years. With respect to the soft environment, China has projected the guidelines for the development pattern of the cities and towns along the bridge; completed the remote-sensing research on the 4,131 kilometer-long and 200 kilometer-wide area in China along the bridge, and conducted initial analyses on natural resources and environment; placed the sustainable development of the area of China along the bridge on the priority list of the China Agenda 21; in 1996, the Chinese government incorporated the construction of the Eurasian Continental Bridge Economic Zone into the Ninth Five-Year Plan and the Outline of the 2010 Long-Term Development Target, in order to make planning comprehensive and to quicken the development pace.

With respect to the hardware construction, China has successively completed the construction of some double-tracking railways, the expansion and rehabilitation of relevant harbors, and the construction of Euro-Asia optical cable communications engineering in the China part, and other major infrastructure projects. The high-level highway from Lianyungang to Hurgos/Xijiang is under construction. The gradual perfection of such major infrastructure will play its positive role in the course of the regional economic development along the new Eurasian continental bridge.

Aim to reach agreement

"A thousand-mile journey starts from the first step." This conference is a good beginning. I would like to suggest that discussion concerning the following issues will be conducted at this conference so as to reach consensus and make decisions, and thus enable the conference to be fruitful and productive.

- Firstly, to conduct study on the measures to quicken the construction of infrastructure facilities in which railways are emphasized. The precondition for the formation and development of the New Eurasian Continental Bridge Economic Zone is the smooth operation of the railway, while the target is to secure the safety, punctuality, and swiftness of the transportation lines, and this can be reached through the fast

construction of railway infrastructure and the strengthening of the coordination concerning the mechanism, management, and services of the multinational railways. Furthermore, the multinational network incorporating telecommunications, highways, civil aviation, pipelines, and ports in accordance with railroad transportation, should be set up accordingly, thus to make full use of the efficiency and effectiveness of the transportation.

- Secondly, to strengthen policymaking and coordination on the improvement of the investment and trade environ-

At the threshold of the twenty-first century, we should revitalize the Silk Road, whose essence stands for opening-up, civilization, evolution, and friendship.

ment. The new Eurasian continental bridge should not be regarded merely as a transportation line, but also an important tie linking the commodities flow, technical exchanges, cultural communication, and the friendship between the people of Euro-Asia. It is necessary to carry out the pre-feasibility studies on the managerial system of transportation, the customs, and trade, as well as investment risks and intellectual property, so as to facilitate the bilateral or multilateral cooperation and coordination.

- Thirdly, to carry out activities of poverty alleviation, focusing on improving the environment and tapping manpower resources. The central part of the new Eurasian continental bridge is endowed with rich resources and has large potentials for development. But the eco-environment is fragile and some people are still very poor. The construction and development of the continental bridge provides the new opportunities of employment for these people which are conducive to poverty eradication. Farsighted politicians and entrepreneurs will also be paid off from this cause.

Ladies and gentlemen, I believe, in the near future, with the further development of the regional economy along the new Eurasian continental bridge, and through the concerted efforts made by the peoples of each country and the international communities, a dynamic economic corridor along the new Eurasian continental bridge, supported by the large- and medium-sized cities alongside it, will take shape. The corridor will be outstandingly characterized by the integration of the east and the west, two-way development, mutual promotion, and common development. At the threshold of the forthcoming twenty-first century, we should revitalize the Silk Road, whose essence stands for opening-up, civilization, evolution, and friendship.

I wish the conference great success, and sincerely hope that every delegate will enjoy your stay in Beijing.